

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 NEAE-00 IO-13 TRSE-00 ACDA-12

OMB-01 AID-05 FDRE-00 MCT-01 SY-05 HA-05 OPR-02

A-01 OC-06 CCO-00 CA-01 SCS-06 /118 W

-----103097 231423Z /45

O R 231234Z MAR 78

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7238

INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM

CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG

CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER

COMSIXTHFLT

CTF SIX ZERO

CTF SIX ONE

CTF SIX TWO

CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO

FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA

FOSIF ROTA SPAIN

DIA WASHDC

CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER

USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 1583

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, MILI, ASEC, LE

SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION, MARCH 23, 1200 HOURS LOCAL

REF: BEIRUT 1542 (DTG 221257Z MAR 78)

1. SUMMARY: THE CEASEFIRE IN SOUTH LEBANON IS STILL
HOLDING, AND THE FIRST CONTINGENT OF UNIFIL HAS ENTERED
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THE AREA. THE PLO HAS AGAIN CRITICIZED U.S. POLICY.

SAEB SALAAM HAS ATTACKED CAMILLE CHAMOUN FOR CRITICIZ-
ING U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 425. FIRST SHIPMENT
OF U.S. EMERGENCY AID ARRIVED. END SUMMARY

2. MILITARY SITUATION.

A. AS OF THE MORNING OF MARCH 23 THE CEASEFIRE IN SOUTH LEBANON WAS STILL HOLDING GENERALLY AND BEING BROKEN ONLY BY SPORADIC FIRING.

B. ON MARCH 22, THE FIRST CONTINGENT OF UNIFIL, ABOUT 50 IRANIAN SOLDIERS FROM THE GOLAN HEIGHTS, CROSSED INTO SOUTH LEBANON AT METULLA. THE MORNING OF MARCH 23, 200 FRENCH PARATROOPERS ALSO ARRIVED IN BEIRUT FOR DEPLOYMENT SOUTH AS PART OF UNIFIL.

3. PLO CRITICISM OF THE UNITED STATES.

IN LINE WITH INCREASING PALESTINIAN PUBLIC CRITICISM OF U.S. POLICY SINCE SADAT'S VISIT TO JERUSALEM, "AN OFFICIAL SOURCE OF THE PALESTINIAN REVOLUTION" STRONGLY CRITICIZED PRESIDENT CARTER'S MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER BEGIN, SHOWING THAT THE PALESTINIANS STILL PERCEIVE THAT ISRAEL AND AMERICAN POLICY ARE INEXTRICABLY LINKED. ACCORDING TO Wafa's ENGLISH LANGUAGE BULLETIN, THE "OFFICIAL SOURCE" SAID ON MARCH 22:

"BY RECEIVING WITH POMP AND CEREMONY YESTERDAY THE TERRORIST MENACHEM BEGIN, WHOSE HANDS ARE DRIPPING WITH THE BLOOD OF HIS PALESTINIAN AND LEBANESE VICTIMS, U.S. PRESIDENT JIMMY CARTER, THE WELL-KNOWN ADVOCATE OF HUMAN RIGHTS, UNCOVERED ONCE AGAIN HIS CONFIDENTIAL

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TRUE HYPOCRITICAL FACE.

"FOR HE DELIBERATELY AND CALLOUSLY IGNORED THE ISRAELI MASSACRES OF CIVILIANS IN SOUTH LEBANON AND BEIRUT, AND THE BLOOD SHED BY U.S.-MADE PHANTOMS, F-15S AND OTHER SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS OF DESTRUCTION. INSTEAD, HE DEPLORED THE TEL AVIV/HAIFA OPERATION, DESCRIBING IT AS "A COWARDLY AND UNJUSTIFIED ATTACK WHICH LED TO THE MURDER OF SCORES OF PEOPLE, AND THE DISPLACEMENT OF THOUSANDS OF OTHERS FROM THEIR HOMES.

"BY CONTINUOUSLY TWISTING FACTS DISREGARDING REALITIES, ABOVE ALL THE ON-GOING ZIONIST AGGRESSION IN SOUTH LEBANON, PRESIDENT CARTER IS UNDERMINING PEACE RATHER THAN ESTABLISHING IT, AS HE CLAIMS. HE IS MOREOVER REVEALING THAT THIS AGGRESSION IS THE OUTCOME OF A PREMEDITATED U.S.-ISRAELI DECISION."

4. CONTROVERSY BETWEEN SALAAM AND CHAMOUN.

A. FORMER PRIME MINISTER SAEB SALAAM ON MARCH 21 ATTACKED NLP LEADER CAMILLE CHAMOUN FOR CRITICIZING UNSC

RESOLUTION 425 THE DAY BEFORE (SEE BEIRUT 1539).
SALAAM TOLD THE PRESS "I DEEPLY REGRET PRESIDENT CHAMOUN'S
ATTEMPT TO OBSTRUCT THE PEACE PROCESS ONCE MORE." AT
THE SAME TIME, SALAAM PRAISED PHALANGE PARTY LEADER
PIERRE GEMAYEL FOR "THE COURAGE WITH WHICH HE SHOULDERED
HIS RESPONSIBILITY." (GEMAYEL HAD CRITICIZED THE RESOLUTION,
BUT IN MORE MUTED TERMS, AND PHALANGE DEPUTIES HAD VOTED IN
FAVOR PARLIAMENTARY RECOMMENDATION ENDORSING IT.)

B. ON MARCH 22, SALAAM APPEALED TO THE CHRISTIANS OF LEBANON
TO IGNORE LEBANESE FRONT'S MARCH 21 COMMUNIQUE ON RESOLUTION 425.
(THE FRONT HAD: (A) CRITICIZED THE RESOLUTION BECAUSE IT DEALT
ONLY WITH THE ISRAELI INVASION AND NOT WITH PALESTINIAN ARMED
PRESENCE IN LEBANON AS A WHOLE; (B) DEMANDED THAT THE GOL
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"BRING THE LEBANESE PROBLEM BEFORE THE SECURITY COUNCIL AGAIN;"
AND (C) THREATENED TO GO DIRECTLY TO THE UNITED NATIONS IF
THE GOL DID MEET THE FRONT'S DEMANDS.

C. CHAMOUN ON MARCH 22 SEEMED TO MODERATE HIS POSITION
SOMEWHAT, HOWEVER. AFTER MEETING WITH PRESIDENT SARKIS
AND FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS, HE TOLD
REPORTERS THAT THE LEBANESE FRONT'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE
RESOLUTION WOULD BE DETERMINED BY FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS
IN SOUTH LEBANON. "IF ARMS SUPPLIES CONTINUE TO
FLOW INTO THE SOUTH," HE SAID, "IT WILL BE NECESSARY,
IN OUR VIEW, TO TAKE THE MATTER TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL
ONCE AGAIN."

5. U.S. AID ARRIVES.

FIRST SHIPMENT OF U.S. EMERGENCY AID FOR REFUGEES
FROM SOUTH LEBANON ARRIVED MORNING OF MARCH 23. SHIP-
MENT INCLUDED 436 TENTS, 95 BLANKETS, MEDICINES, AND OTHER
MATERIALS (SEE BEIRUT 1565).
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Type: TE
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